

Alfred Nobel and his Legacy

Alfred Nobel (1833 - 1896) was a Swedish scientist, businessman and inventor who left a large fortune for the establishment of five prizes to be distributed annually for the benefit of mankind. They were to be for Chemistry, Physics, Physiology or Medicine, Literature and Peace. A fifth, for Economics, was added later. The prizes are still awarded and continue to be highly prestigious.

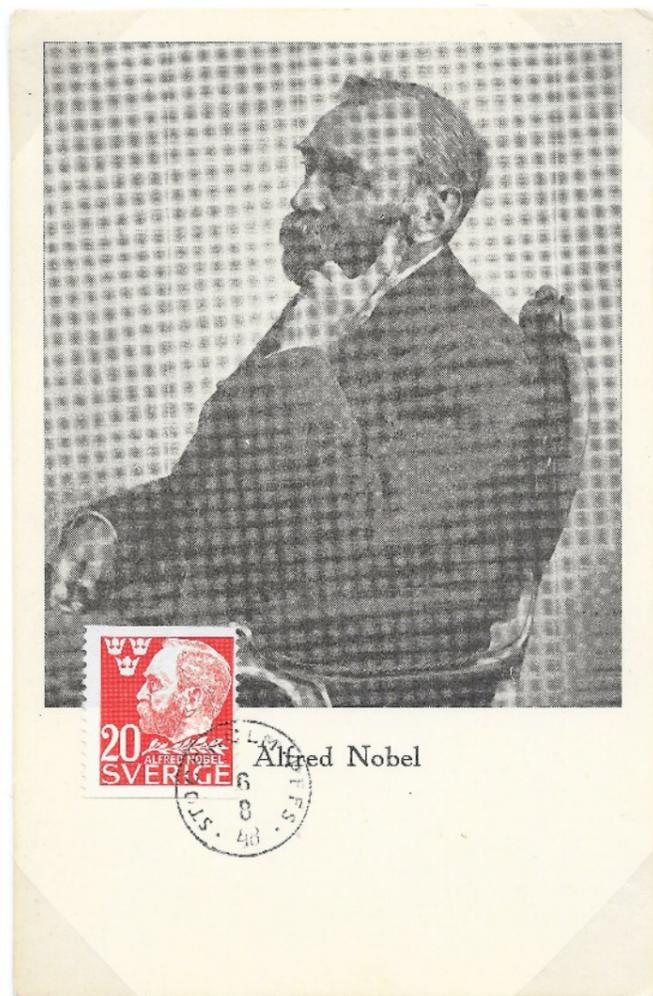
Right: Painting of Nobel by Gösta Florman (1831 - 1900)



US 2001 - Centenary of first Nobel prizes

PLAN (number of pages)

- 1 (3) Introduction: Birth of Nobel in Sweden
Early years in Sweden and Russia
- 2 (4) Inventor and Businessman
- 3 (2) Travels and Death in Italy
- 4 (3) The Will and Nobel's wishes
- 5 (2) Award Ceremonies
- 6 (2) The First Laureates

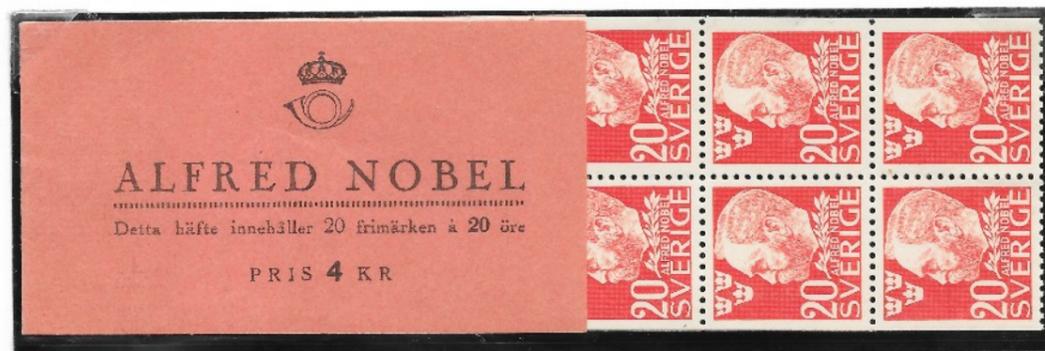


Alfred was born in Stockholm on 21st October 1833 and lived there until 1842 when he was 9 years old



Far left: Old Stockholm

Left: STADTPOST - Stockholm local post

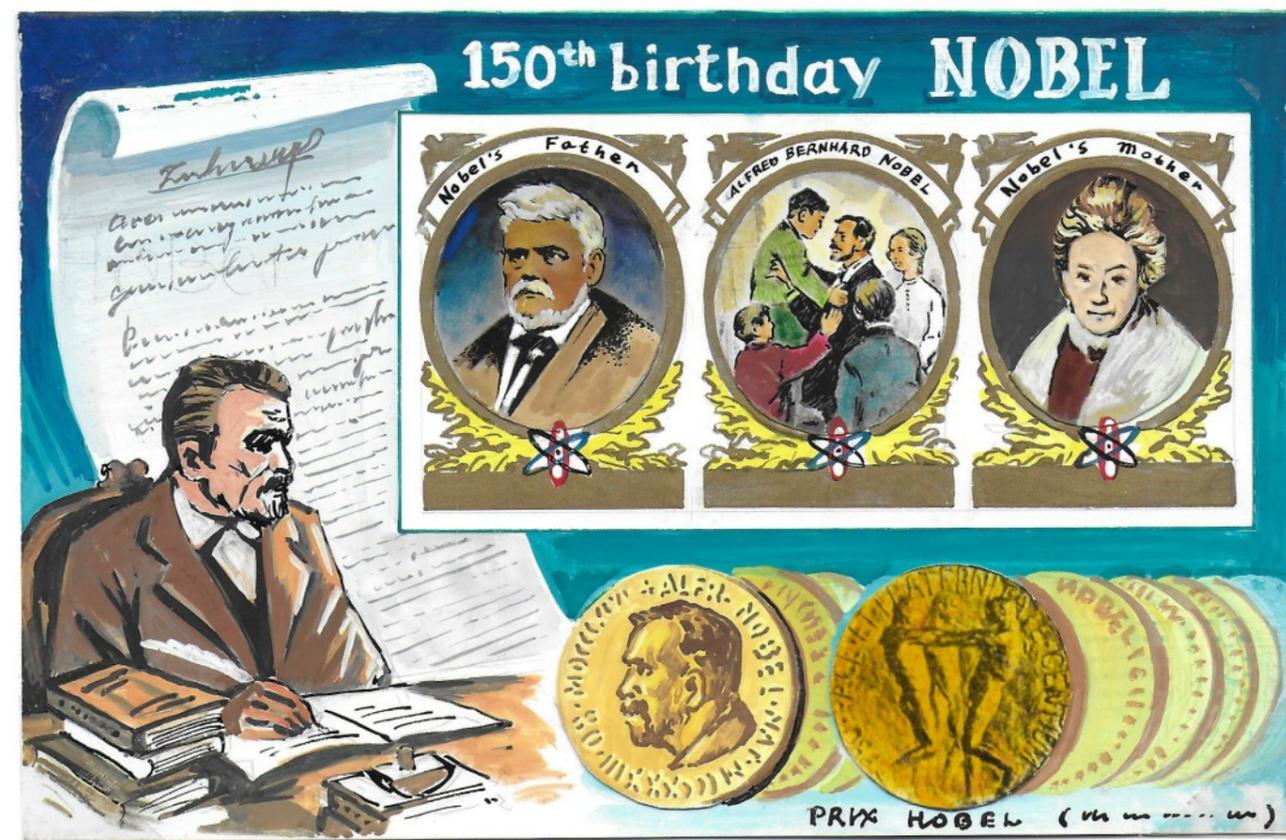


Sweden 1946 - 50th anniversary of Nobel's death

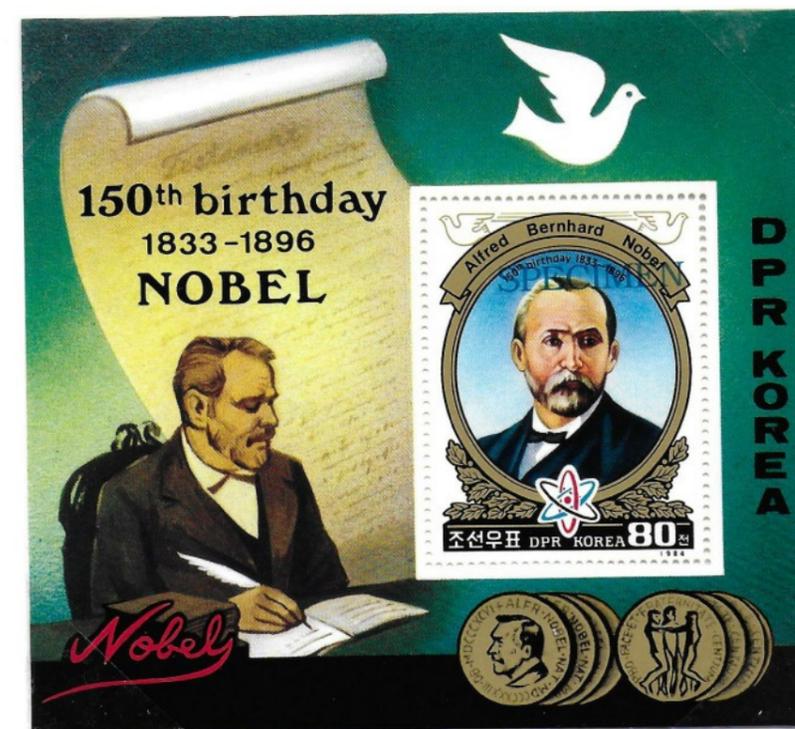
1. Early Years

1.2 - Alfred's Birth and Family

Alfred was one of eight children, only four of whom, all boys, survived past childhood. The fourth, Emil, died in an explosives accident as a young man. This North Korean art work is very unusual in showing not only the Nobel parents, Immanuel and Andriette Nobel, but also the family group with Ludvig, Robert and Alfred.



However, the above design was not adopted for the final Birth Commemorative by the same artist, below



1984 - SPECIMEN (with overprint) m/s: 'Portrait of Nobel' for 150th birth anniversary in 1983. Stamp not issued separately

1. Early Years

1.3 - The Nobel family in Russia

In 1842 the Nobel family moved to St Petersburg, where Alfred had a private education in languages and chemistry. After travels in Europe 1850 - 52 he returned to St Petersburg to work as a chemist with his father. Nobel Sr was an influential and successful businessman.



The Historic Centre of St Petersburg.

The Left Bank of the Neva River, renamed the Palace Embankment in 1754, now has World Heritage cultural status.



St Petersburg cancel

1853-4 stampless entire from St Petersburg to Bordeaux, France. This travelled on a French Packet, routed via Germany (Prusse on green circular postmark) and Paris



Young Alfred would certainly have travelled on this or a similar route

As well as his native Swedish, he learned Russian by living there. With the help of his extensive travels around Europe Alfred also learned French, German, English and Italian, six languages in all.

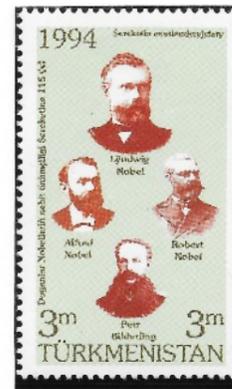


Armenia 2001 for European Year of Languages

2. Inventor and Businessman

2.1 - Oil in Baku

After their father's death in 1872 Alfred and his brothers Ludvig and Robert formed the Nobel Partnership with Peter Bilderling to continue their business interests in Russia. Their exploitation of oil in Baku, the largest city on the Caspian Sea, made Alfred an independently wealthy man. Their work also contributed greatly to the development of the oil industry as we know it today.



The partners, clockwise from left: Alfred, Ludvig and Robert Nobel, Peter Bilderling.



Russia - 'Petroleum Exploration in Baku'



"Zoroastr" - First oil tanker in the Caspian Sea



'Oil derricks' SPECIMEN (in Japanese MIHON).



Postal meter mark for Esso, an affiliate of EXXON and one of the big players in the oil industry. The figure, with the head shaped as a drop of oil, is the Esso logo.



Nobel Brothers Partnership envelope with Baku postmark

2. Inventor and Businessman

2.2 - Explosives

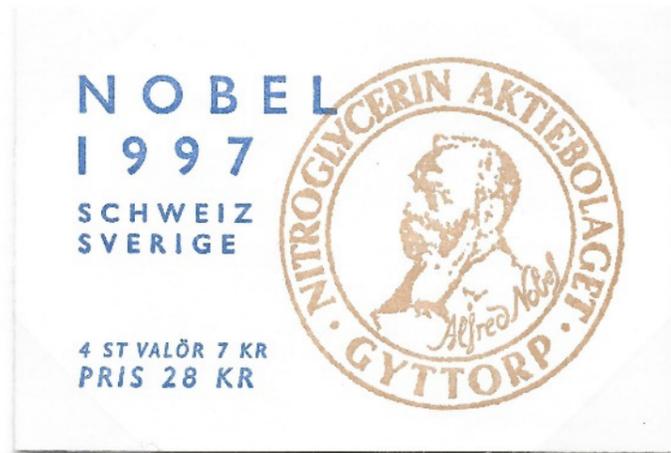
A keen and creative scientist, Nobel patented 355 inventions in the fields of electrochemistry, optics, biology, and physiology. Many were explosives, the best known of which was Dynamite (from Greek 'Dynamis' - 'Power'). This was much safer to handle and patented in 1867 established Nobel's fame worldwide. After Nobel's death it was said that the 'History of modern explosives is practically the history of his life'.



Dyno Industries, founded 1865 by an associate of Nobel and Norwegian businessmen and still based in Oslo, became the world's 2nd largest manufacturer of explosives (after ICI at the time)



Explosives



Booklet cover: Nobel the scientist. Nitroglycerin is a key component of Dynamite



Gold mine

Explosives were particularly important in South Africa. The Modderfontein Dynamite Factory NE of Johannesburg (below), established 1894, grew into the biggest Dynamite Factory in the world, supplying the gold mines of the Witwatersrand.



2. Inventor and Business Man

2.4 - The Importance of Nobel's Patents

It is not widely known that much of Nobel's wealth came from his patents, in three ways. Firstly by selling his patented inventions at a high price; secondly, by granting licences to others to make, use, sell or import his inventions; thirdly, by using the law in cases of infringement.

Nobel had returned to Sweden in 1863 to continue experiments with nitroglycerine and after some fatal explosions he worked to make its use safer. One of his earliest patents was in 1863 in Sweden for a percussion detonator - the 'Nobel Lighter'.



Booklet 1984 - Centenary of establishment of the Swedish Patent Office, formalising earlier patent systems in force since 1819.

Nobel had patents in many countries, most important were the USA and UK.



US 1870 postage stamp with fancy Patent cancel

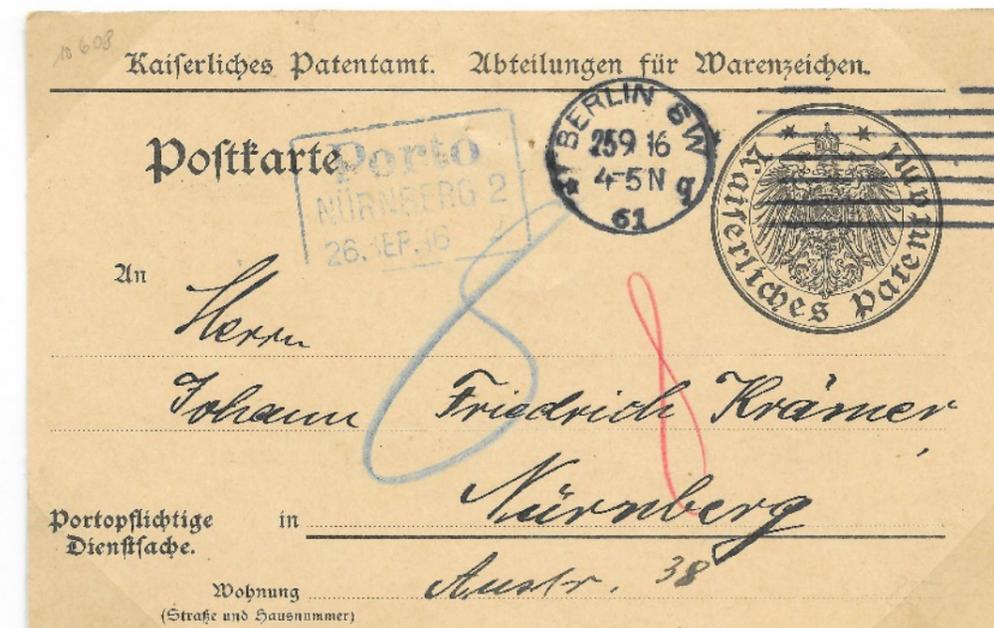
R: English 'Letters Patent' were first issued in the C14th. The British Patent Office was set up in Newport, South Wales, in 1852, as the UK's sole office for granting of patents.



Low to very high value GB Victorian patent revenue stamps - 2d, 8d and £5



German Patent and Trade Mark Office (DPMA), founded Berlin 1877, issued several patents to Nobel in Paris 1885 - 1888. The first to Dynamit Nobel in Hamburg was 1878 for: 'Use of camphor and its compounds to reduce explosivity of explosives'.



Imperial German Patent Office - Kaiserliches Patentamt as on official postmark at left.

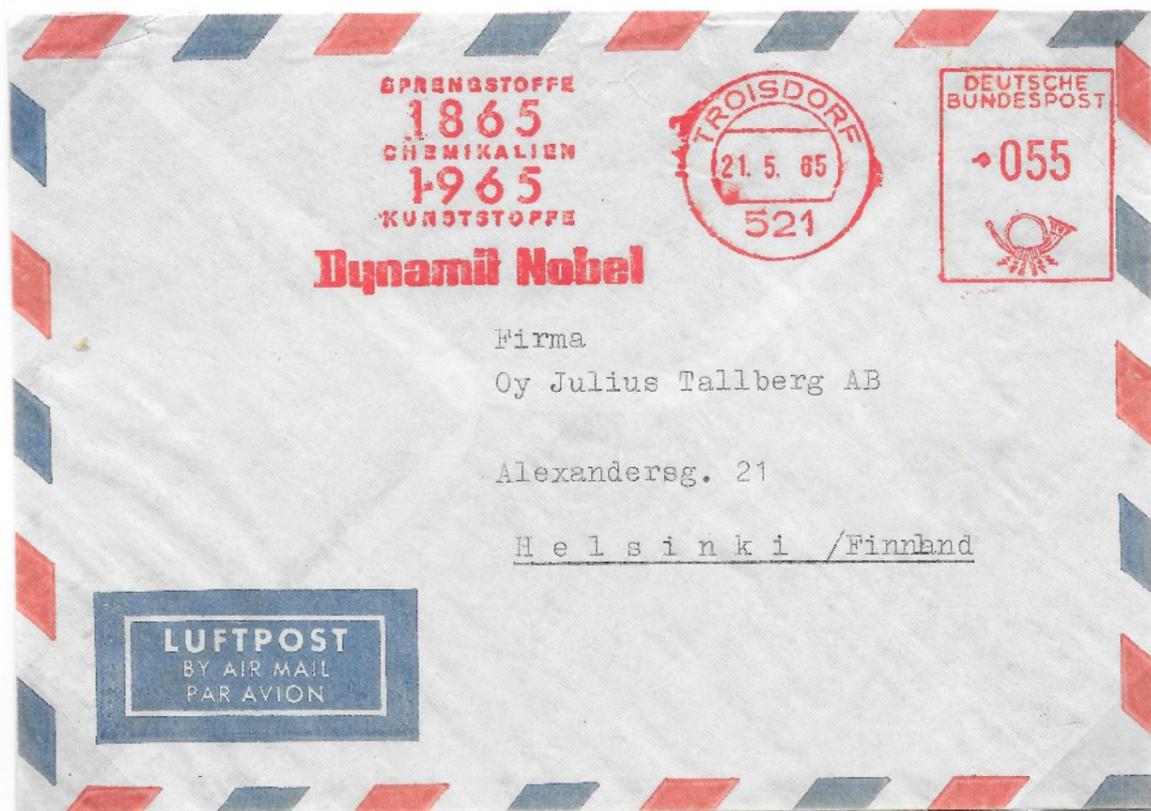
1916 Official card from the German Imperial Patent Office. It did not require a postage stamp as the card was already postage paid, as was typical for government departments and agencies at the time.

2. Inventor and Business Man

2.4 - Growth of Nobel's Industry

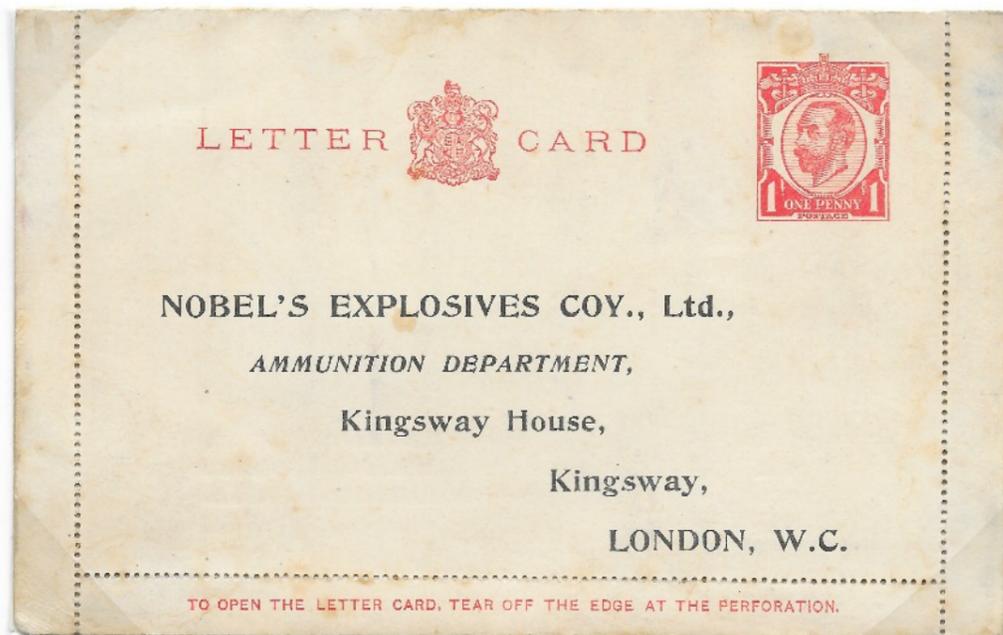
As well as being an inventive scientist, Nobel was a clever and persistent businessman. He defended his patents fiercely and his enterprises grew into a world industry

Nobel founded over 90 factories and labs in 20 different countries. In 1865 his base was in Hamburg, where he founded Dynamit Nobel. It still exists with its HQ in Troisdorf..



1965: Centenary of founding Dynamit Nobel with own meter mark from HQ in Troisdorf.

Nobel's Explosives Co. Ltd was formed with a detonator manufacturer in 1876 in Scotland; its factory was in Ardeer and the HQ in Glasgow. The name and partnerships changed several times over the years and in 1926 the company became a founding member of ICI



ICI perfin



Scan of front

ICI became the largest producer of chemicals and explosives operating factories around the world. In 2007 it was taken over by AkzoNobel.

3. Travels

3.1 - A Lifetime of Travel

As a child Nobel had lived in Sweden and Russia and then had educational travels in his late teens (see 1.3). As an adult and in his own lifetime he came to be known as 'Europe's richest vagabond'. He had no permanent home and travelled widely, often for business reasons..

Nobel lived and worked in Hamburg, Germany from 1865 - 73 (below left)

In 1873 Nobel moved his home and lab to France, with a house on Ave Malakoff in Paris and his laboratory in Sevrans.



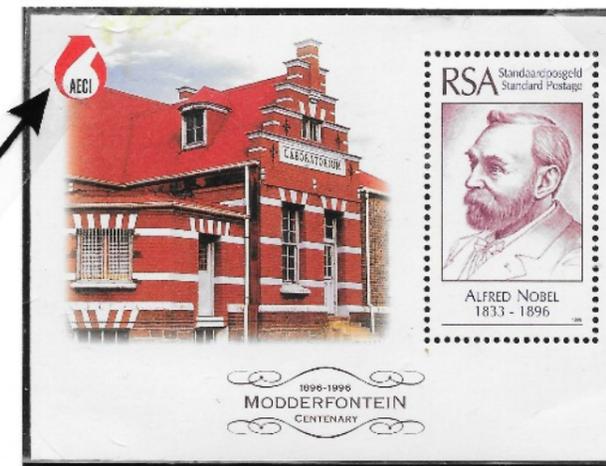
1860s Hamburg local



By now a rich man, in Paris Nobel had stables for his fine Russian carriage horses and indulged his passion for cultivating orchids



Nobel never lived in South Africa but he would have visited there. According to the Modderfontein Museum he helped shape the destiny of that country.

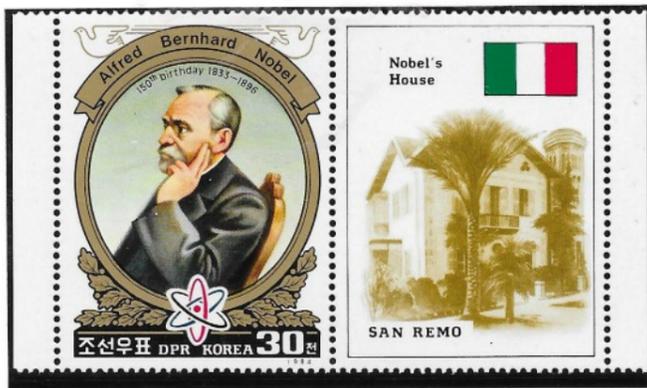


AECI (African Explosives and Chemical Industries) is a mining and explosives company.

3. Travels

3.2 - Death in Italy

Nobel's final move was to San Remo in Italy in 1891. He intended to return to Sweden in due course but died in San Remo on 10th December 1896, a lonely end with no family or friends present.



Death anniversaries

10th December has been remembered as since their beginning in 1901, Nobel award ceremonies in Stockholm and Oslo have been held on that date.



FDC with Swedish death commemoratives. Only the red 20 ore were issued in booklet form (see page 1)

Nobel's body was taken back to Old Stockholm where he was buried



4. Nobel's Will

4.1 - The Will - Nobel Foundation Established

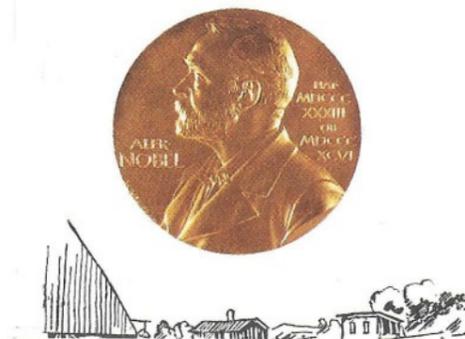
Nobel wrote the final version of his will in 1895, the year before he died and it was opened in January 1897. The will was handwritten by Nobel without lawyers and settlement took three years, mainly because of family objections and because the institutions instructed by Nobel to carry out his wishes had not been consulted and were unwilling to shoulder the overwhelming responsibility.



1995 - centenary of the writing of the will; stamps in booklet as on FDC with special postmark (below). The first stamp, showing Nobel in his lab was a joint issue with Germany (above right).

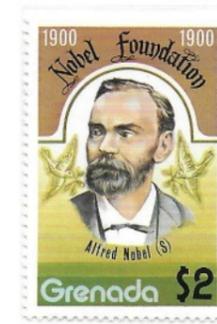
Nobel was clear about his wishes: "The capital, invested . . . shall constitute a fund, the interest on which shall be annually distributed in the form of prizes to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind". He defined how this was to be interpreted for each prize and specified the prestigious organisations he wished to administer the awards.

Förstadagsbrev · First Day Cover



Despite the difficulties in proving the will, in 1900 the Nobel Foundation and Fund were legally in place

Right: The purpose of the Foundation was to manage the Fund, that is, the finance and administration of the Nobel prizes. It did not get involved in the awards.



Left: From the beginning the Foundation wanted a worthy building of its own in Stockholm and an architect (Ferdinand Boberg) was appointed. However, the war interfered with their grand plans and in Dec 1918 the Foundation bought an existing building and after years of renovation moved in in 1926.

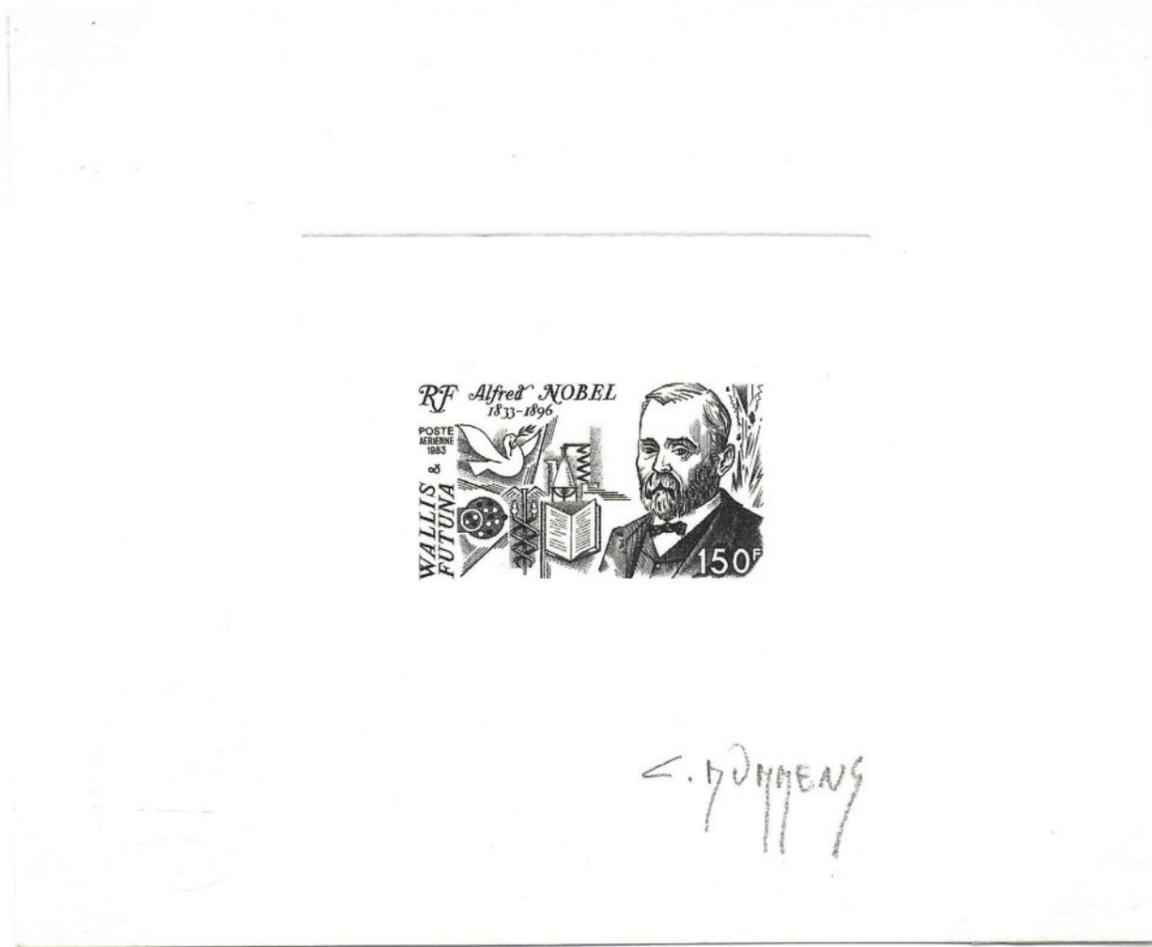


Above: Sturegarta 14, Stockholm is still the Foundation's HQ today.

4. Nobel's Will

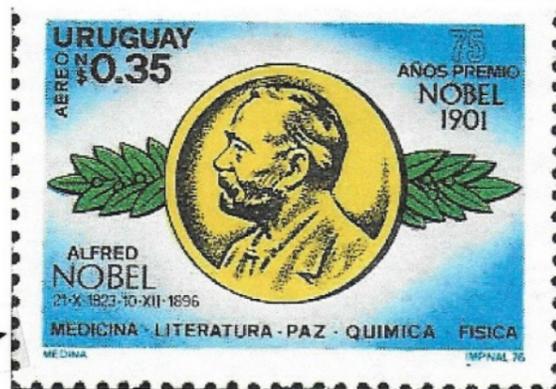
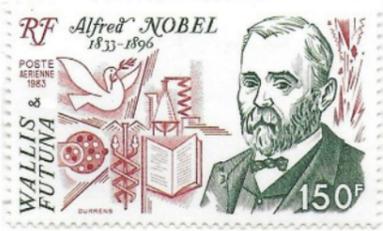
4.2 - The Legacy of Prizes

Nobel had been very specific in his will that the Nobel Foundation to be established would fund five prizes to benefit mankind. According to his wishes, the prizes to be awarded were for: Chemistry, Physics, Physiology or Medicine and Literature (to be administered in Sweden) and Peace (Norway). The Economics Prize came later.



Die proof in black signed by the engraver, DURRENS.

Above and below left: Nobel with symbols of all five prizes



Enlarged copy

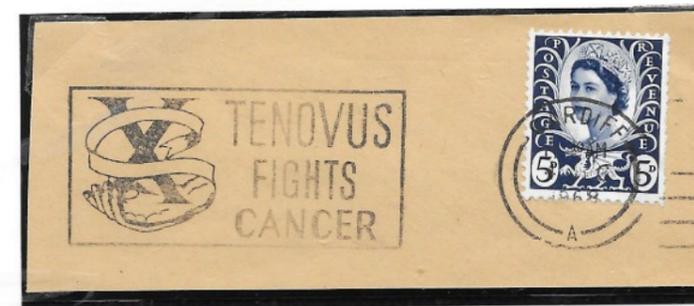
Right: Listing the five prizes



4. Nobel's Will

4.3 - The Six Prizes

Nobel set out clearly his reason for each of the subjects to be included. The reason for the addition of the Economics prize in 1968 is also explained. These six prizes have continued almost annually, interrupted only by the war years, to the present day.



Above - PHYSIOLOGY or MEDICINE: "One part to the person who shall have made the most important discovery within the domain"



Left - PEACE: "and one part to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses"



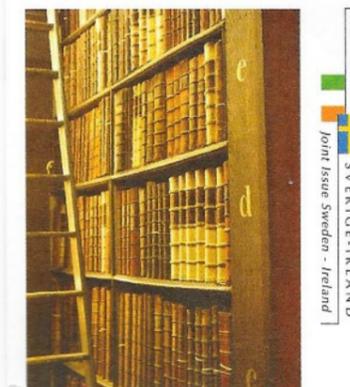
Fir 1965 Pure and Applied Chemistry Congress

Left - CHEMISTRY and - PHYSICS: one part each " to the person who shall have made the most important discovery, invention or improvement"



For Physics award to Albert Einstein

Right - LITERATURE: ". . . for the most outstanding work of an idealistic tendency"



Nobelpris i Litteratur

4 frimärken/stamps
Valör 10 kr
Pris/Price 40 kr

Right: - ECONOMICS: In 1968, Sveriges Riksbank (Sweden's central bank) established the Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel. Generally known as the Nobel Economics Prize, it is awarded in Stockholm according to the same principles as the other prizes.



SPECIMEN - 1998: WU University of Economics and Business, Vienna, for centenary of founding.

After WW2 its importance increased and many Austrian managers and politicians were educated there.

5. Awards Ceremonies

5.1 - Stockholm, Sweden

Nobel specified that the Prize awards and selection of Laureates in Stockholm were to be the responsibility of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. From 1901 until 1925 the presentations were in the Royal Swedish Academy of Music; from 1926 to the present day the venue has been the Stockholm Concert Hall



1939 FDC for bi-centenary of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Stockholm. Berzelius (on stamps) was Perpetual Secretary of the Academy from 1918 until his death in 1948. Known as the 'Father of Swedish Chemistry'. Addressee Dr Carl Lammerer was a research chemist and scientific translator; in his 35 years at Dupont he earned 53 patents.



Sweden 1971 for bi-centenary of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. Venue 1901 - 1925

The Nobel award ceremonies are prestigious occasions with prizes in Sweden presented by the King. On the issue below celebrating the king's 40th birthday, its inclusion shows the importance of the Nobel ceremony.



1986 Booklet strip. Centre stamp shows King Gustav XVI presenting the prize for Literature to Czeslaw Milosz in 1980.

5. Award Ceremonies

5.2 - Oslo, Norway

Nobel wished the Peace prize to be administered by the Norwegian Institute, which hosted the ceremonies until 1947. The venues changed to Oslo University in 1948 and in 1990 to the City Hall. Although the awards are not presented by the king, the ceremonies are major international occasions with the Norwegian Royal family always present.



Nobel Peace prize booklet



King Olav V

Venues below:



Nobel Institute 1901 - 47



Oslo University 1948 - 89



Oslo City Hall 1990 to present day

Below: Oslo City Hall



邮政编码

2009 Chinese Postal Stationary (Nos 651637/38)

During 2009 there were several visits of senior dignitaries to Norway. Two major events in the City Hall commemorated the 60th anniv of the Chinese Republic and the 55th anniv of diplomatic relations between Norway and China. (However, relations were strained in 2010 with the award of the Peace prize to Lui Xiaobo, imprisoned human rights activist and reformer.)

6. The First Laureates

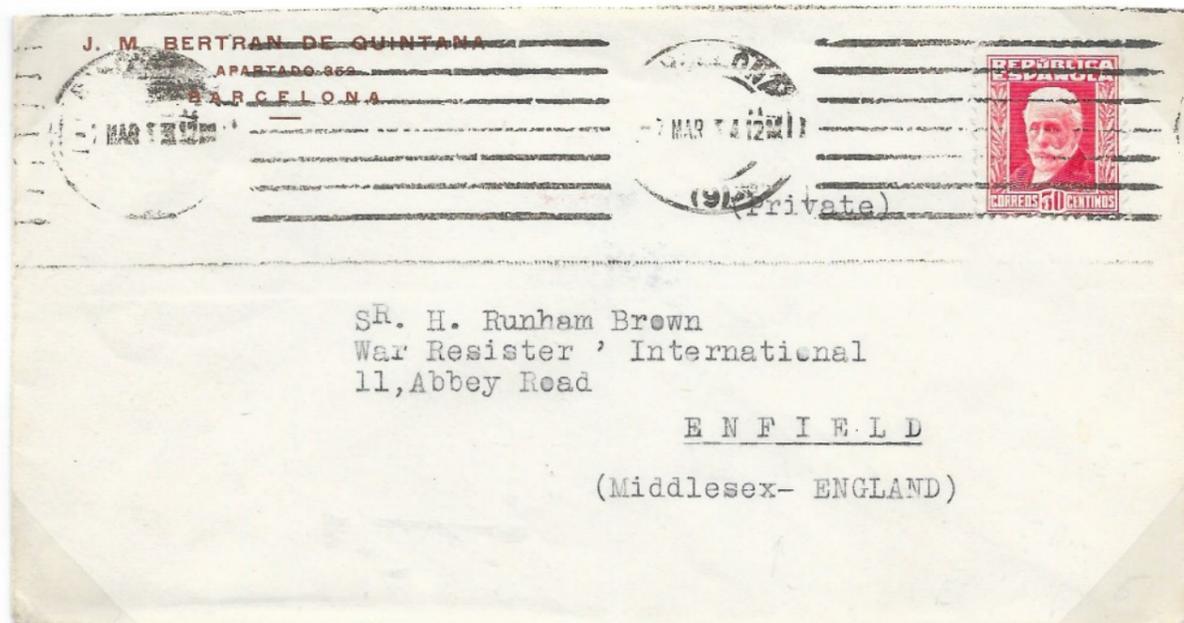
6.1 - Nominations

Potential laureates are selected from nominations by Parliamentary Nobel Committees. The process of receiving nominations starts in September; the cover below from the Norwegian committee to the secretary of Geneva University, dated November 1904, contains a form asking for nominations for the 1905 award.



The laureate in 1905 was Bertha von Suttner, pacifist friend of Nobel. She had received 32 of that year's 89 nominations.

Herbert Runham Brown was a Christian Pacifist, founder member of the War Resisters International in 1921 and its first Secretary until 1949. In 1932 he was one of 42 Nobel Peace prize nominees and received six of the total of 74 nominations. In 1936 he wrote a Pamphlet: 'SPAIN - A Challenge to Pacifism'.



March 1934 from Spain to HRB at the International Office of the WRI in Enfield, England.

6. The First Laureates

6.2 - The First Laureates in 1901

The first prizes were awarded in 1901

The first four Laureates awarded prizes in Sweden that first year were: Wilhelm Röntgen (Physics); Jacobus van't Hoff (Chemistry); Emil von Behring (Physiology/Medicine); Sully Prudhomme (Literature)



1961: Swedish FDC commem 60 years since first Nobel Prize. Dated 9-12, the day before the award ceremony date

The first Peace prize was to have gone to Henri Dunant for his founding of the Red Cross and Geneva Conventions, However many said that the Red Cross did not promote peace - rather it humanised the face of war. To deal with this, the prize was shared with Frederic Passy, a bona fide peace activist. Passy was a French economist and author who worked tirelessly to promote peace.



FDC for 50th anniv of first Nobel Peace award. Postmark dated 9-12; the awards are presented on 10th December.

Nobel's legacy of five prizes, with the addition of the Economics Prize, even though still often controversial, continues to this day.